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PROGRAM Meet the Press

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SUBJECT Interview with President of the Philippines

BILL MONROE: Our guest today on Meet the Press is the President of the Philippines, Ferdinand E. Marcos, who is making his first official visit to the United States in 16 years. President Marcos has dominated the politics of his country since 1965. For eight years, ending last year, he ruled under martial law. In June of last year he was elected to a new six-year term as President in an election boycotted by most opposition groups. President Marcos received 88 percent of the votes cast.

Our reporters today are Louis Carr of Fortune, Robert Novak of the Chicago Sun-Times, Richard Smith of Newsweek, and to open the questioning, Marvin Kalb of NBC News.

MARVIN KALB: Mr. President, there are two American bases in the Philippines, Subic and Clark; and there are going to be renegotiation of those bases starting next April, according to the White House. Will you put any restrictions on the use of those American bases for any American activity in the Middle East?

PRESIDENT FERDINAND MARCOS: Well, it is covered by existing memoranda of agreement and exchanges of notes. I'm afraid I'm not free to reveal the contents of some of the agreements. But the general substance of the use of the military facilities is that the United States is given freedom of operations with respect to the use of the military facilities in the Philippines.

KALB: Does that mean, sir, that if there were a crisis in the Middle East, that the United States could use those two bases if it saw fit to use them?

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PRESIDENT MARCOS: Provided that it involved a matter which is necessarily relevant to the safety and security of the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

KALB: Do you see the security of the Philippines, in that case, connected to the turmoil in the Middle East?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: In many ways, yes.

KALB: So that...

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Because, first of all, the lines of communication, of the transport of oil -- and the transport of oil pass directly beside the Philippines. If you will remember, the Malacca Straits and Balabac Straits, South China Sea pass beside the Philippines. If you will remember, there's a boundary between Vietnam and the Philippines. We abut each other.

KALB: I just wanted to be clear about your answer, sir. In other words, there are no restrictions, then, on the use of those bases.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: There are. But if there was to be hostilities, probably there won't be.

KALB: Let me ask you the common defense needs relating to those bases. The United States is paying about \$100 million a year in rent. Since the bases are there for the common defense of both countries, why is it that you are asking more money for rent, or higher rent from the United States?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: We have not asked for more money. What we have asked is that a study be made of exactly what is the role that the Philippines should play and what exactly are the defense plans in any contingency, whether these involve the Philippines or any other country.

MONROE: Thank you, Mr. President.

We'll be back with more questions for President Marcos.

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MONROE: Our guest on Meet the Press, President of the Philippines Ferdinand Marcos.

Mr. Smith.

RICHARD SMITH: Mr. President, some members of the American Congress, the press, Amnesty International, and some members of the Philippine community in the United States have

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charged that your government is engaged in systematic violations of human rights, including, in some cases, torture and political assassination by members of the Philippine military. How do you react to those charges? And did President Reagan raise these issues with you in your talks with him?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: First, let's go the other way around. President Reagan didn't raise it because the truth of the matter is this is not a policy of our government.

Secondly, the Philippine government is not engaged in any policy or widespread abuse and torture of prisoners. There may be some instances where there have been maltreatment of prisoners. In those cases, we have punished the culprits. There are now pending in the court more than -- well, I would say about 500 cases of officers and men who have been charged with abuse. We have since 1972 to the present kicked out, dishonorably discharged from the armed forces about 7000 men, among others -- not all of them -- among others, who because of abuse of prisoners.

Now, some of the prisoners who claim to have been tortured are doing this deliberately to set up a defense in the criminal cases that are filed against them for murder, torture, arson and pillage, as well as for subversion, rebellion and insurrection. At the beginning, they don't claim any torture. But as soon as the lawyers get to them, then they claim torture.

SMITH: Your government recently arrested a number of labor leaders and opposition leaders and charged them with subversion. What precisely did you see the threat in that situation?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Let's take a look at one single incident of a labor leader, Mr. Ulalya (?). He's not just a labor leader. He's a communist commander. He fought the government for five years. He was convicted. We released him and we let him go. He became a labor leader. And as a labor leader, we discovered that he was not just seeking better wages for the laborers. He was trying to paralyze industry. And who was the person who testified against him? His own partner in the labor union.

SMITH: Could you characterize any differences between the Reagan Administration's approach on the human rights issue to your government and the Carter Administration's?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, the Carter Administration was more, should we say, articulate in its belief in newspaper reports about torture. I thought perhaps that a better policy would be for them to send -- for the government to send its own

investigating groups, for the State Department, through the U.S. Embassy, to conduct its own investigations.

After all, everybody's entitled to a fair hearing. You get a group like Amnesty International, or any other group, and they listen to all kinds of rumors and stories. They don't even confront us. They don't confront the Ministry of Defense. They don't confront the chief of staff. They don't confront anybody. And they come up with this report. That's unfair.

ROBERT NOVAK: Mr. President, some of your critics have called you a dictator who intends to spend the rest of your life in the presidential office. One of the tests of whether a leader is a dictator or not is whether he intends to voluntarily relinquish power. Do you intend to step down at the end of your present term?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I've already relinquished power. If that is the test of a dictator, then I am not one.

In the second place, a dictator is one who decides alone.

Now, let me clarify all of this. I don't decide things alone. In the Philippines we decide it by consensus. Even during martial law. There is a common belief that the military took over and I was in the commander-in-chief, and therefore I just dictated whatever the decisions were. No. On the contrary, the military supported the decisions of the civil government. The civil government is run by a party caucus. We have a modified presidential system. And the party in power controls the legislature. This caucus decides. I call a caucus whenever there's anything to be decided upon.

I have delegated almost all of my powers to a 12-man, or 15-man executive committee. Right now there are 10 members.

NOVAK: But specifically, sir, I asked whether you intend to leave the presidency after the six years.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I wish I could right now.

NOVAK: But in six years you don't intend to seek another term?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, that's a different matter. Here is a situation where suppose you have a war, suppose you have an emergency, suppose the party again says the other party can't put up a candidate who can run the country. What will I do? I would rather that we cross this bridge when we reach it. But it is my intention -- It is my intention to tell the party to

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look for another candidate.

NOVAK: One of the things that's concerned some of the friends of the Philippines is the speculation that your wife, Imelda, has already been designated as your successor.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No, no, no.

NOVAK: Can you guaranty that she will not succeed you in the presidency?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: She's not going to be the successor.

NOVAK: She is not going to be the successor.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No, she's not going to be the successor. But she may be needed to help the successor. Because without her help, or without my help,...

NOVAK: Less than ten years...

PRESIDENT MARCOS: ...the successor may not be able to succeed.

LOUIS CARR: One of the reasons, Mr. President, that you've given to your people for assuming rather wide powers, which I realize you gave up recently, was the serious economic problems of the Philippines. Why, then, sir, does the Philippines rank lowest among the non-communist Asian countries in nearly ever indicator of social and economic progress?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No, that's not true. That's not true. And even in your article in Fortune we discovered quite a few, well, wrong statements.

First of all, we doubled our gross national product from 1972 to 1980 and '81. The per capita income increased from \$214 to 828. There is no country in Southeast Asia which has had the successful land reform program and increased its food production to become self-sufficient and become an exporter of food like the Philippines. You can mention any. You can mention all the countries there.

[Confusion of voices]

PRESIDENT MARCOS: ...increased from half a billion dollars to three billion dollars.

CARR: Why, then, sir...

[Confusion of voices]

CARR: Well, they, then, sir, has the World Bank reported that 40 percent of your people live in poverty?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Oh, no. No, no, no, no, no. The poverty line in the United States is different from the poverty line here. The income of Filipinos of 2999 -- that's our line, 2999. In 1972, 59 percent of the people had income of this level and below. In 1975, it went down to 31 percent. Now, that certainly is an improvement. In 1980, it went down to 20 percent.

CARR: One of your leading economists, however, has said recently that the real income -- that means after inflation -- of the poorest one-third of your people has actually decreased in recent years.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: [Unintelligible] Whoever that economist is, he probably should go back to school or get a pair of new glasses.

MONROE: Mr. President, going back to the questions of Mr. Smith, how do you account for the extensiveness of the reports of official brutalities in the Philippines? Amnesty International says that killings, torture, disappearances of political opponents are on the rise. A recent BBC documentary showed a young boy talking about watching soldiers behead his father. A Filipino newspaper said that a lieutenant colonel led the 18 armed men who committed a massacre of 45 men, women and children in Samar.

How do you account for so many reports of official brutality?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Sloppy reporting. And lies, lies.

I admit that some of those are correct. And we punished some of those men. Those people whom you say were reported as having massacred some of the villagers.

May I say that the armed forces themselves did not execute them. They fought them and they were killed in action.

MONROE: Amnesty International says investigations of theirs do not indicate that people who are said to have been killed opposing armed forces are actually killed that way. And they also make the point that investigations don't generally lead to any results, except maybe some military man being demoted. And that the official investigation of the massacre I referred to has never been fully made public.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Because they won't attend the investigations. They just reason from the sidelines, I suppose.

Look, there was a supposed Samarian massacre. Two hundred people were supposed to have been killed. And so what do we do? We asked the Minister of Defense to bring everybody -- we invite everybody. Did the Amnesty International come? No. But the opposition groups went. And some newspapermen went. Mr. Briscoe went. Briscoe of Newsweek, I think. Or Time?

[Inaudible comments]

MONROE: Associated Press?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Associated Press. He went. And what did they find? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. There was a fight. One or two men were killed. And that's it. But a massacre of 200? No.

What is happening is we are falling for the propaganda of the Communist Party. And those young kids are very adept in the use of propaganda.

Look, some of these communists even use the uniform of the armed forces, and then they go and start shooting at villagers. And, of course, what information do you get? The armed forces has shot up this village.

What kind of an armed force would be able to capture the top echelon of all of the leaders of the Communist Party from 1950 to 1980? The first top leaders, the first-echelon leaders, second-echelon leaders, third-echelon leaders. They're all in jail or have been eliminated. The only country in Asia that has successfully done so. Why? Because the citizens are cooperating with the armed forces.

KALB: Mr. President, one of the possible benefits of your being in office as long as you have is that you may have developed a sense of historical perspective. And I'd like to lean on that possibility and ask you, after Vietnam, after the American debacle in Vietnam, how reliable is the United States as an ally? Do you believe, in other words, that the U.S. would fight another land war in Asia?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I'm afraid that there are doubts and misgivings about your fighting a land war in Asia. This is why we feel that each and every small country should be permitted to develop its capability to fight a land war in its own territory. But we probably would have to depend upon the United States for a war in the sea and in the air, as well as a nuclear umbrella.

KALB: Well, how reliable an ally is that, in that case, as you see it?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, as we see it, the United States

could strengthen our economic positions, and at the same time become a deterrent.

From our point of view, the situation in Asia is not such that it would encourage any predatory power from engaging in external attack in any country.

SMITH: Mr. President, in your talks with Secretary Weinberger and the President, in addition to discussing the question of so-called rent for the bases, what other kinds of military aid did you talk about?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: We didn't talk of military aid. We talked of the scheme to establish, or the scheme under which we would be able to study the irritants that may exist between our two countries under the three military agreements that govern our relations: military assistance pact, military bases or military facilities, and mutual defense.

Now, we have agreed that the two Secretaries of Defense will meet regularly, and their respective staffs will also meet. We've also agreed that the mutual defense board created by the mutual defense pact will now start organizing for any contingency, but that we should be permitted to look at it and see what our role is.

SMITH: You've been quoted recently as saying that you fear that Japan will dominate Asia, not only politically -- or not only economically, but politically. How do you react to American efforts to get the Japanese to increase their defense spending and their defense capability?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Worried. Very worried. I am certainly for Japan being able to defend itself, but I'm against strengthening Japan so it becomes another threat to us, the small countries in Southeast Asia.

SMITH: Do you see that as a real threat?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Of course. After it has acquired the capability of self-defense, where do you think it will go?

NOVAK: Mr. President, in line with our previous discussion of whether the United States is a dependable ally. When your wife made a mission to the Soviet Union this year, was this a step toward hedging your bets, a move toward Philippine non-alignment in the world struggle?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No. She merely went there to attend the Tchaikovsky competition, where one of our scholars participated. And he, incidentally, won one of the...



NOVAK: But she had some serious discussions on economic questions.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yes, she had, because she was instructed to find out what the intentions were.

NOVAK: Well, let me ask you this. Do you think, sir, that you have more faith in the dependability of the United States as an ally since President Reagan has been in?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yes.

NOVAK: Do you think the attitude of the Congress is any different than it was before?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, it's not different, because your system is for a check and balance between the Congress and the President, which is different from ours. But what I mean is you have a President and an Executive Department earnestly trying to establish a viable foreign policy and reestablish the prestige of the United States in the world. And I think that the members of Congress understand that.

NOVAK: Let me ask you one other thing on that, sir. you said that you were not asked by the members of this Administration about human rights during this...

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No, no, no. By the President.

NOVAK: By the President. Were you talked to by the members of the Administration about human rights on this visit?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Oh, yes. Yes, of course.

NOVAK: What did they say?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, they, of course, asked me what was happening in the Philippines. And we gave them reports.

NOVAK: Were they unhappy?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I don't know, to be frank with you. I explained to the Foreign Relations Committee, both parties and both houses, all about human rights.

CARR: Mr. President, many big Philippine companies run by your friends and relatives have been flourishing with the help of government loans that they now can't repay, and they're getting bailed out by the government. How do you explain that?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: And there's where your article in

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Fortune is completely wrong. They are not my friends.

Now, let's take a look at DVD. I've never met the man, and DVD ran off with \$18 million worth of indebtedness and pay. Now, if that's the kind of a friend I have, by God, then you'd better change the dictionary.

And next, we have [unintelligible]. One billion dollars we have had to support it for the past 10 or 20 years. Who is the owner? Caberouze, whose daughter is married to Osmania, who was my opponent the last time I ran for President. Are those my friends.

Then you have Benguet Consolidated.

CARR: Excuse me, Mr. President, but Mr. Silverio and Mr. Decini are your friends.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Mr. Silverio...

CARR: And they are being bailed out by the government.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Hold on. Hold on. Mr. Silverio is a Japanese representative. If you think that I would become a Japanese representative, you're completely wrong. You'd better write a different article for Fortune.

CARR: When I met Mr. Silverio, he said, "What are friends for if they can't help?" when I asked him why he was being helped by the government.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Probably you are as easily impressed as some of those who have come to the Philippines with talk like this. Silverio is nobody. Right now, he and his friends are being prosecuted. Did you know that?

MONROE: Thank you, Mr. President, for being with us today on Meet the Press.